



Testimony of

**Ed Hawthorne, President
Connecticut AFL-CIO**

Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 4, 2022

***SB 184 An Act Extending Through November 8, 2022, Several Changes Regarding
Election Administration As A Result of COVID-19 And Concerning Eligibility
To Vote By Absentee Ballot***

HB 5262 An Act Revising Certain Absentee Voting Eligibility Statutes

Good afternoon Senator Flexer, Representative Fox and distinguished members of the GAE Committee. My name is Ed Hawthorne, and I am proud to serve as the President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a federation of hundreds of local unions representing more than 200,000 workers in the private sector, public sector, and building trades. Our members live and work in every city and town in our state and reflect the diversity that makes Connecticut great. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on two important bills that will expand voter participation, strengthen our democracy, and provide a sense of relief for those who fear exposure to COVID-19.

The United States has one of the lowest voter participation rates in the developed world. There are many practical reasons people provide for not voting. Busy schedules, family responsibilities, transportation issues and other variables can account for one's inability to vote on Election Day. Since the pandemic began in 2020, the threat of contracting or spreading COVID-19 has become another such variable. SB 184 and HB 5262 provide a practical solution to protecting the public health concerns of the citizens of Connecticut who want to vote in the 2022 elections.

More than 650,000 Connecticut voters voted by absentee ballot in the 2020 CT General Election – which means they voted early on their own schedules. This led to a record-breaking 80% voter turnout. We should be proud of this turnout and want to replicate it in the 2022 elections.

I urge the members of this committee to support SB 184 and HB 5262. Listen to the voters. They spoke loud and clear in 2020 by utilizing the option to vote by absentee ballot in huge numbers. Protect the right to vote by providing registered voters with the ability to vote in a way that is best for them.

Thank you.